



Arlington Open Space Committee

Date: November 9, 2023.

Time: 7:30 PM.

Location: Conducted by Remote Participation.

Present: Wendy Richter, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, David Morgan, Eliza Hatch, Ann LeRoyer, Nelson Mui, David White, Kathryn Davies.

Absent: Brian McBride, Shirley Canniff, Brian Kelder.

Minutes.

1. Administrative.

- a. Approval of October 26, 2023 meeting minutes.

The draft October 26 minutes were approved by the committee.

- b. FY24 Budget tracking.

Nothing new to report.

- c. Other items.

The December meeting was listed on the Town website as December 28th and it will be changed to be December 7th.

All members of the Committee need to complete the State Conflict of Interest training as soon as possible.

2. Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) & CPA Implementation (Action Items).

- a. OSRP Objectives – Implementation (Outdoor programs)

Nothing new to report.

- b. Urban Ecology Framework Presentation:

Kathryn Davies from Tufts University joined the meeting to participate in this presentation.

Arlington Nature Futures – a Pilot Project – Presentation by David Morgan and Kathryn Davies.

The Urban Ecology Framework is an effort to better understand people and nature in Arlington as well as the prospects of doing climate work through the lens of urban ecology. This would allow the town to focus more on natural systems in its overall planning. This framework encompasses multiple areas, starting with climate work, but including zoning, development, and many other concerns that the town wants to



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address. The framework allows these issues to be addressed through a lens of urban ecology, thinking about what role ecology plays in supporting our livelihoods and vice versa.

This collaboration will allow for conversations about the values we place on systems, the way we discuss varying interests from varying viewpoints, and could be useful in agenda-setting for the coming decades. The framework seemed like a natural way to integrate social aspects of work into solely physical nature and ecology work. D. Morgan hopes to use the Nature Futures Framework, developed by K. Davies to elaborate on the Urban Ecology Framework allowing for and encouraging more discussion of social issues.

K. Davies created the Nature Futures Framework with a group of international collaborators; the hope is that it will lead to the development of different scenarios and models. As Arlington is already thinking about so many pieces of the puzzle and collecting data on biodiversity in an urban space, the Nature Futures Framework could provide the town an opportunity to think strategically and more broadly about the future of Arlington.

The goal is to create a pilot program to develop future visions that allow space for the prioritization of both people and nature. This will include:

- Testing new tool for scenario and model development
- Identifying key components of Arlington's social and ecological systems
- Developing scenarios and models that can guide decision-making and improve conditions for people and nature
- Identifying potential value trade-offs, conflicts, and areas of agreement

The Framework can help Arlington transparently think about and discuss these aspects of planning and can challenge the town to think about uncertainties more strategically. It should help push discussion to a place where the town can think about what is being prioritized relative to what the future in Arlington might look like.

D. Morgan provided an example. The Mill Brook corridor is a social and ecological system that has been at the center of Arlington's thinking for a long time. Different groups talk about corridor in varying terms: it is a natural system (a brook that runs through center of town) with ecological implications (the immediate buffer area, ecology supported by proximity to brook); it is an area of development (lots are redeveloped along the brook)



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with opportunities for a discussion of urban ecology (possibility of connecting sites along the corridor, particularly for recreation purposes). The Framework would help the town tease out these different goals and discuss them in plainer terms with a wholistic lens, in comparison to the current way single issues come up (example: Conservation Commission holds hearings on a development proposal along the brook). The Framework would allow discussion of the broader goal for the system while incorporating the single issue at hand.

The Framework encourages discussion of what decisions are being made to prioritize certain values over others. The visual representation starts with a triangle: each corner pushes you to think about a different starting point of thought and certain characteristics associated with that lens. One corner is “nature for nature” (belief that nature has intrinsic value; thinking about diversity of species, habitats, ecosystems; belief in the inherent value of natural world). The second corner is “nature for society” (highlights the value that nature provides to people and society). The third corner is “nature as culture” (focuses on where societies, cultures, traditions, faiths intertwine with nature). This starting point can be used to prioritize certain lenses over others and provides a way to challenge decision-makers to constantly think about positive futures while recognizing different lenses of thought.

Key steps and approximate timeline:

Phase 1: Establish Context and Collation - Summer 2023 to Summer 2024

- Collaborate with key stakeholders to develop pilot plan
- Establish funding mechanisms to support Arlington Nature Futures work
- Collate existing relevant work (plans, data sets) with the Nature Futures Framework

Phase 2: Embrace Collaboration and Complexity - Summer 2024 to Summer 2025

- Develop scenarios and models that explore a diversity of desirable human-nature relationships
- Inform and inspire ongoing and upcoming strategic planning processes
- Work with the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to enhance the implementation of the NFF in Arlington and elsewhere

This effort would require participation from many groups in town. D. Morgan reported that the Planning Department and Town Manager are



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interested in using this framework. Next steps include exploring funding that might be available for this project. Conversations with different departments, boards, committees, and residents should begin. A. LeRoyer noted that the implementation of this framework could overlap with the next master planning process for the town. D. Morgan agreed that the framework would be useful to have ground-level conversations prior to the master planning process.

E. Carr-Jones suggested building support for the framework by actively using it and showing how useful it is; the thought process and prioritization could be used immediately. A. LeRoyer suggested we need to prioritize staying grounded within the Open Space and Recreation Plan; it is important that the Committee keep track of the implementation of the objectives in the OSRP. It was noted that it is important to keep a balance between vision and implementation. W. Richter commented that the more we can exemplify how the OSC work fits into the framework, the individual projects will help to solidify the value of the framework. The framework will hopefully make some projects less controversial and give more clarity to how decisions are being made.

D. Morgan reported that Tufts students are using the OSRP as initial data. As an example, they can use the bus routes, local heat maps, and survey data from the Wicked Cool Mystic Project to determine that there are increased roles for street trees in and around bus stops to improve cooling. By taking all of these data and information elements and combining them within the framework, Arlington should be able to become more strategic in planning priorities and actions.

D. Morgan noted that he has more data to share. It was suggested that there be a larger meeting within the town to share his findings.

3. Updates from Liaisons.

- a. Department of Planning and Community Development.
Nothing new to report.
- b. Park and Recreation Commission.
Nothing new to report.
- c. Conservation Commission.
Nothing new to report.
- d. Department of Public Works.
N. Mui reported that Susan Brunton has been the Director of GIS in



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Arlington for almost a year now. She is working with multiple departments to explore options for a new GIS system for the town, as the current system is not as robust as she believes would be useful.

N. Mui reported that the fall tree planting campaign is in process: the Tree Warden has received 150 bare root trees and DPW is planting ten to twelve trees a day. The goal is for all 150 trees to be planted before Thanksgiving. There will also be a spring planting of an additional 150 trees. Typically, the town plants slightly more than 300 trees a year (usually 320-330) depending on the varieties of trees available.

N. Mui reported that this was the last week of the year that DPW is doing field maintenance work prior to the winter. The irrigation company been winterizing the town irrigation systems.

N. Mui reported on rain garden progress. DPW is trying to coordinate rain garden installation with certain roadway projects; there are a few locations in mind, but they are still finalizing the sites. Due to heavy rain over the spring and summer, existing rain gardens experienced a lot of overgrowth. DPW is working to learn best practices on how to cut back different types of vegetation. DPW hopes to train some staff on best vegetation mixture and maintenance for these rain gardens. D. Morgan offered support to DPW in this training. D. White noted that the town received a small grant from DCR for a Magnolia rain garden.

N. Mui reported on stormwater management efforts by the Engineering Department. The town is currently in year six of a twenty-year plan; a consulting company (Weston and Sampson) is engaged to assist the town to stay on track with its twenty year plan. The town has applied for a few grants (a mixture of state and federal) to achieve the near-term stormwater goals. D. Morgan said that two grants from the federal government are pending; once the federal government creates a budget, the town can file for the funds. The town should receive a portion of a \$1 million grant; the timing and amount is still to be determined.

E. Carr-Jones asked if it was possible to put the tree inventory done at Hill's Hill into the current GIS system. N. Mui reported that the street trees are in the GIS system, and DPW hopes to add more overlays once the new GIS system is up and running. D. Morgan noted that the tree inventory from Hill's Hill has been published. It was mapped by a volunteer and the Parks and Recreation Commission currently has the map and information. D. Morgan is not aware of any plans to incorporate data from



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this tree inventory into the GIS system. He noted that perhaps adding more tree data to GIS layers could become a future CPA project. There is a tree inventory for the Symmes conservation restriction. Mt. Gilboa has not yet had a tree inventory. N. Mui said that as people are adopting individual trees it would be useful to have those individuals be able to check off a box in GIS to indicate that they watered their adopted tree. The goal is to get more data points on town assets.

e. Envision Arlington.

A. LeRoyer asked if there had been any conversations with the organizers of EcoFest. D. Morgan will be meeting with the organizers periodically leading up to the event.

f. Arlington Redevelopment Board.
Nothing new was reported.

4. Updates/Discussion (Tracking).

a. Special Town Meeting zoning articles – MBTA Communities.

MBTA Communities and other zoning articles passed Town Meeting.

b. Artificial Turf.

The committee is convening soon; the date is still being determined.

c. CPA FY23 Updates.

The Cooke's Hollow wrap party was postponed to November 16th after being delayed due to weather.

There will be a public meeting about Mt. Gilboa on December 7 at Peirce.

The Robbins Farm Playground demolition was completed and some grading has been done.

d. CPA FY24 Updates.

D. Morgan reported that the invasive species reporting project was coming to a close. In the spring there will be discussion about results and how the town can maintain the data and hopefully overlay it on the GIS system.

e. CPA FY25 (Public Land Management Plan, McClennen Park Ponds, Menotomy Rocks Playground, Crosby Park)

D. Morgan drafted the Public Land Management Plan. It is currently being reviewed before the final application is due. He indicated that letters of support from stakeholders would be helpful.



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The McClennan Park Ponds application is in progress. D. Morgan met with the Water Bodies Working Group about the project. D. White suggested adding a question of flooding impact of inaction to the scope of the grant. The application is due by mid-December.

There were on-site meetings for Menotomy Rocks playground and Parallel Park and the surveys are now open for community input.

f. **40B Comprehensive Permit Projects.**

The project at Thorndike Place is being reviewed by the Conservation Commission for stormwater considerations and habitat value. The Commission is enlisting help from consultants to assess the proposal before returning to discussion with the applicants.

g. **Other Items.**

A. LeRoyer asked if there were any issues at Mill Brook. D. Morgan reported that a subcontractor was pumping water into the brook and assured the town it was fresh water; there was no evidence to the contrary. The environmental monitor for the project was asked to follow up.

Meeting adjourned at 9:06PM.

2023-24 Meetings.

(4th Thursdays except Dec.): Dec 7, Jan 25, Feb 22, Mar 28, Apr 25, May 23, Jun 27.